

Making Room for Jesus

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[0 : 00] For those of you who are here for the first time, Watermark is a church where we want to be like a family. That's why we have chaos. That's why we like chaos.

It's great. We can just be very real and chaotic like a family. Again, I don't know what Christmas means to you.

But for me, Christmas growing up was a very significant time. And the thing that I remember most about Christmas was before Christmas, this magazine would come out, which was called the Radio Times.

And in this magazine, there would be all the movies, all the television shows that were going to be on over Christmas. And me and my family, particularly my brothers and sisters, would fight out of who was going to watch which movies.

And most of them were terrible, but we still wanted to watch them anyway. And so at Christmas time, one of those movies was the best, most successful movie of Christmas movie of all time.

[1 : 08] Does anyone know what the most successful Christmas movie? Sound of Music. No? It's a good guess. Good guess. Die Hard.

That good Christmas movie. Yes. White Christmas. No? It's a wonderful life. Christmas count, man. Okay, so you're terrible, guys. I mean, it is, I'll give you a clue. This year is its 25th anniversary. Home Alone.

Home Alone. Home Alone. Who has watched Home Alone? Home Alone. Home Alone. Okay, if you're under about seven, maybe you haven't, but Home Alone is like one of those classics. Okay? If you haven't watched it, Home Alone is about a boy, an eight-year-old boy called Kevin, who basically is forgotten by his parents. They fly off to Paris.

[2 : 09] They leave him alone in the house. And then he discovers that there are two burglars who are going around the neighborhood looking for empty houses to burgle, and they have just realized that his house might be empty.

And they're coming for his house. And so Kevin has to come up with as many different ways that he can to try and stop the burglars from getting in.

And so now, I'd like to just show you one scene from the movie. Okay. Hey, everyone remember that scene. Great. Well, I think that actually that scene is very like our lives.

You may not have drawn the connection, but let me help you get there. Because I think that, and I don't know what your view of God is, whether you're a Christian, whether you're not a Christian, whether you're not sure this morning, but I think regardless of where you stand, I think many of us in this world feel like if there is a God, then maybe at some point in our lives, he has abandoned us. He has left us alone. And we look around the world at Christmastime, and there's so much stuff going on in the world, whether you look in the Middle East, whether you look at the terrorist attacks in Paris, whether you look in the U.S., the refugee crisis in Europe.

[3 : 34] You look all around the world. And then a little bit closer to home, you think about the pressures of work, the pressures on your kids, the pressures just of getting Christmas dinner together. And everywhere seems to be putting pressure on us.

And it feels like even those of us who say we claim to know God don't seem to be doing any better than anybody else. In this world where there seems to be insecurity around us, not just burglars coming to attack us, but other things around us in the world.

And so it's up to us, if God has left us, it's up to us to kind of deal with these things by ourselves. A bit like Kevin, who has to come up and be very busy with lots of different strategies to try and make himself safe, to try and keep himself secure in this uncertain world.

And the Bible verse for today is a very strange one. It doesn't really feel a very Christmassy one. It's this one from Psalm 10. In his pride, the wicked man does not seek him.

In all his thoughts, there is no room for God. And then the second one is, but God demonstrates his own love for us in this. Why we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[4 : 55] Okay? It doesn't seem very festive to talk about this. But actually, this is really what the heart of Christmas is all about. Let me explain, because that first sentence is talking about bad news.

And even in the Home Alone movie, there is some bad news for Kevin. And the bad news is, as my pride says, it's up to me to face this world.

I've got to deal with it. It's up to me because nobody else is going to help me out. Because God has left us. He's abandoned us. And so, I've got to sort out my family problems.

I've got to sort out the health issues. I've got to sort out the kids. I've got to sort out finding the right one, the number one in my life. And we've all got to do all of these things, building our career.

And we've still got to look good on the outside. And it's all very stressful. So, we have to worry.

Because we have to worry because we've got to try and keep up the appearances for everyone to see.

[5 : 59] Why are we busy trying to cope with all the things in our lives? I'm busy worrying about whether my wife minds if I haven't got her a present yet. Whether there's enough money in the bank for raising kids.

Whether the rents are going to increase. Okay? And it's so worrying because it's all on me. I've got to deal with it all. It's all about me.

And the problem is, I know that I'm not all powerful. I'm not all knowing. And I'm not all present everywhere. I'm not God. And yet, some of these problems outside of me seem God-sized problems.

So, I worry and I stress. Maybe even at Christmas, we're worrying and stressing. And so, like Kevin, we come up with our little coping strategies with how to deal with our stress.

And we go to the gym. We do yoga. The one I really like the most at the moment is, have you seen these books? They're some of the best-selling books at the moment. The Color Me Calm adult coloring books.

[7 : 01] Have you seen these? I think these are great. But they're like the top sellers at the moment across the world. Now, have you ever thought why they're so successful?

It's because none of us can cope with life and the stress. Okay? Just like me, I can't cope with the stress. And so, we all need a bit of coloring therapy to help us out in life. I mean, I think it's great. But that's what we go to. Now, I don't know about you. But I don't know what strategies you use to cope with life at the moment. I don't know what your worries at the moment show you about how you're handling your world that's going on.

And the thing is, I don't think it's just outside things which cause us to feel like this. I think there's also inside things. It's not just a bit of stress relief. Because we also have inside insecurities as well. Like Kevin, even if sometimes I think I'm doing okay, I think I'm coping fairly well with the world, deep down inside, I know that there's, if I'm really honest, when I go to bed at night, there are times when there are areas of my life where I'm not actually coping well, where I'm not really successful, where I'm not actually measuring up to everything that I think I should be.

[8 : 21] And we all carry a little bit of guilt and shame with us. And Keira Knightley, the actress, said, If only I wasn't an atheist, I could get away with anything.

You just ask for forgiveness, and then you'd be forgiven. And it sounds much better than living with guilt. I'm not sure about the getting away with anything bit. But I think she's actually being very real and very honest.

And that's, as a church, we want to be very real and very honest, even at Christmas time. Because I think we all live with a little bit of that guilt and shame.

And Christmas is actually a time, for some of us, that can really be felt even more acutely with families. And I think also, for me, if I'm honest, one of the reasons that, you know you get those flag day, the stickers at flag days.

You know, one of the reasons I kind of, I like to give to those things, and particularly at Christmas time, is actually I feel a little bit better about myself once I've given something to someone. And I've got a little sticker on me, which then says, Oh, I'm okay.

[9 : 27] I'm doing all right by myself. And it just helps me to feel a bit better. But actually, it brushes some of the guilt under the carpet. But it never removes the things that are in my heart. That's kind of some of the bad news.

And the Bible says, actually, that the real bad news isn't that God has abandoned us. It's that we have abandoned God. We have abandoned God. We've said, God, if you're there, I want you just to be a puppet who plays the rules of my game.

And if you're not going to play like that, then I don't really want you. You're kind of like a Buzz Lightyear toy. Put him away in the attic until he's useful, and then you can bring him out, and then he'll fix some things for you.

And then you'll put him away again. And I do that. I do that. I say, don't call me. Don't call me. I'll call you when I need you, God.

That's very much the sign at Christmas. Because when I'm stressing, when I'm worrying, and, you know, even this morning, even this morning, it's a stressful. This morning, I don't know how stressful it was for you this morning.

[10 : 29] Even for me, it was stressful coming here this morning. And then you come in, and you know, your kids have been killing each other with their latest toy. And you get in, you're tearing your hair out. And then you come in, and suddenly it says, Merry Christmas.

And then it's all kind of, hi, Merry Christmas. And then you go away, and, oh, glad I got out of the way. But why do we do that? Well, because sometimes we're actually not making room for God.

Stress, worry is a sign that I'm not making room for God. But the Christmas story comes into this. That's kind of the backdrop. The Christmas story is an amazing story.

And it says that though you and I have abandoned God and said, I want to deal with life by myself, God hasn't abandoned us. He came as a baby in a manger for you and for me.

He came as a baby in a manger for you and for you and for you and for you and for you and for you and for you and for you.

[11 : 29] We don't have to pretend. We don't have to put up all those kind of Christmas lights like Kevin does and pretend that everything's fine on the outside. We don't have to do that. We don't have to pretend because Christmas is about helping us be real and honest.

Be real and honest. God can see behind that curtain. He can see behind the masks. He knows my fears. He knows my hopes. He knows my dreams. He knows my guilt. He knows all of those things about you and about me.

And yet, even though he knows all of that, he still loves me. He still loves you. He came because he loves you.

He knows you at your worst and yet he's loved you to the skies. That is amazing. That's why the other verse says, God demonstrates his own love for us.

That while we were still sinners, Christ died for you. To bring you back into relationship with him. To show us that we never need to be abandoned in our life again.

[12 : 36] Because God abandoned his son on the cross so that he would never abandon you in your life with whatever's going on at the moment. He died to forgive you for all of that guilt and sin.

Wiped away forever. Now, I don't understand why many things happen in the world. I don't understand. But one thing I do know is this.

The message of Christmas is, God has not left you home alone. He's not left you home alone. And God is calling out to each one of us, whether you are a Christian or not a Christian.

He's saying, will you make room for me this Christmas? You don't have to keep performing so that others can just see something on the outside.

But inside you're finding it struggling and difficult. Because even though others may not realize what's going on on the outside, God knows what's going on on the inside.

[13 : 40] And yet he still wants a relationship with you. So, if the Christmas story is a fairy tale, it's just a made-up story, then we're like Kevin, left trying with our own strategies to cope with all the stress of the world around and the guilt of ourselves inside.

We're just left with our coloring books, trying to cope with the world. But if the Christmas story is true, and I really believe it is true for every one of us, wherever you're up to right now.

And millions throughout the whole of history have found this to be true. He's offering peace in the midst of a crazy world. He's offering forgiveness in a world where we struggle to find any way to cleanse our guilt.

He's offering joy. He's offering hope. And so the question is, whether you right now feel like you're far away from him or near, how are you going to respond to him today, this Christmas time, with what he's telling you today?

Let me pray. Father, I thank you that you don't leave us alone, that you're with us. And I don't know what's going on in everyone's life.

[15 : 03] I know the craziness sometimes in my own life. And thank you that we don't have to kind of keep putting up those masks and pretending. Because Christmas is a time of joy.

And it's a time of joy because of you. Because Jesus, you are the one who can bring joy, whatever our circumstances. I pray for us right now, whether we're just looking forward to going away and having turkey or having something else, or whether we're struggling on our own, or whether this time brings back memories which we find very difficult.

Help us to know and respond to you to realize you want to be with us. Help us to make room for you today. In your name.

I'm out.